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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001410

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA

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TAGS: KISL PREL PGOV NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SHEKARAU DISCUSSES ATTACKS, NATIONAL POLITICS

REF: A. ABUJA 1377

¶B. 08 ABUJA 2148

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Anthony Eterno for reasons 1. 4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) On July 29, Kano State Governor Ibrahim Shekarau informed Ambassador and DCM (with PolOff notetaker) that apart from the Boko Haram attack on a police station on the outskirts of Kano, the state remains calm. He attributed the peace to the state's "Societal Reorientation Program" which he claimed has provided youth with hope through "engagement and self-improvement opportunities". Shekarau also discussed politics claiming to be a supporter of a credible electoral system and the rule of law. He stated that those in government positions must uphold laws of the land appropriately in order to capture the trust of the population. Shekarau also expressed disappointment over other governors' decisions to decamp from the All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP) to the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

¶12. (C) Shekarau told Ambassador that approximately 100 members of Boko Haram attacked the Wadil Local Government Area and shot two police officers (ref A). He said that the police killed 3 people and arrested 35 people. According to Shekarau, those arrested are being charged on July 29 and an accelerated hearing has been requested. The Governor said that they made sure the violence did not spill over into the Kano metropolitan area by increasing security patrols along the city's borders. He also suggested that members of Boko Haram are not fundamentalists or extremists, but rather that they "act out of sheer stupidity." He added that Islam encourages education and that Boko Haram's message would not appeal to the general public. Shekarau said he believes Boko Haram is able to attract followers because of the high unemployment and general neglect of youth by the government. However, he attributed the peace in Kano, despite violence in other parts of the country, to his administration's "Societal Reorientation Program," which is tasked with sensitization of the population through media and other outreach programs, and empowerment of people through opportunities for self-improvement.

¶13. (C) In response to Ambassador's inquiry on Governor Shekarau's question on the direction of national politics and the next elections, he said he believes "a lot needs to be done to capture the confidence of the general public." He

opined that an election can be free, without violence, but that if the people do not believe in the results, then it is a waste of time. He said that there are two goals that must be achieved. First, electoral law must be reformed so that people actually believe that the elections are free and fair.

He said that the federal government has set the ball rolling, but that "it is disappointing how it is going in the National Assembly." Second, he said that the people who execute and oversee the law must be credible.

¶4. (C) Shekarau said his colleagues who have decamped from the ANPP to the PDP "acted unethically" and "are morally bankrupt." He said it was acceptable if the party decides to merge with another party, but not for an individual to switch parties while holding office. Shekarau was encouraged by the Supreme Court's statement that a party, not an individual, is elected and said that although it is difficult to challenge those who have switched parties, the ANPP is determined to "give a fight."

¶5. (C) Comment: It is doubtful that Shekarau's "Societal Reorientation Program" has been Kano's saving grace amidst other conflicts in the North. If anything, high poverty and unemployment rates, poor access to basic services, and hunger, make Kano a possible fertile ground for Muhammad Yusuf and his followers to recruit more members. With regard to politics and electoral reform, Shekarau used the same rhetoric that we hear over and over from politicians, but has done seemingly little himself to support electoral reform efforts. End Comment.

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¶6. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
SANDERS